

Study on Daniel Chapter Seven

We now begin to study symbolically and go back in time to Belshazzar. Basically this is the vision of the four beasts. The time is 553 BC. Daniel had a vision and he wrote it down. Daniel had a dream at night of the four winds of Heaven (here God demonstrates His active power by using the elements.) This refers to divine activity using the nations that are about to be involved, for God's own purpose.

See the following references:

Isaiah 29: 6

Revelation 7: 1

Exodus 10: 13

Exodus 14: 21

Exodus 15: 8 – 10

The winds stir up the Great Sea (This must not be confused with the Mediterranean Sea this is a figurative sea at the middle of the earth surrounded by the nations - it describe the restless state of the nations.

Isaiah 17: 12 – 13

Isaiah 57: 20 - The nations referred to here are wicked so are restless like the sea

Jeremiah 47: 2. (This describes the Philistines)

The water in Jeremiah refers to the nations rising up and destroying other lands

Verse 3 – The beast = King = Kingdom (See verse 17)

Verse three talks about four great beasts who would arise and each differ from one another. So if we look at first 17 we see that the four beasts are four kings and their kingdoms (Revised standard says kings, The International version says kingdoms) see diagram of statue from chapter 2)

The first beast describes Babylon as in King Nebuchadnezzar's time when he was being changed from man to beast. This showed God humiliating and hindering Nebuchadnezzar's power and showing Him that God was in control. Excavations in the area of Babylon show gates with lions with eagle's wings

The Second Beast (verse 5) Read verse - This referred to the Medo-Persian Empire. These were the Medes and the Persians that had come together to form one Empire but at this time the Persian element was the dominant force. The bear being raised up one side is symbolic of the dominance of the Persians. The three ribs underline how ferocious the bear (i.e. the Medo-Persian Empire) was and they were trying to devour other nations, as they were greedy for power. In this second beast their greed and ferociousness are being underlined – they were out to conquer any and everyone

The Third Beast (Verse 6) Read verse - This is the Grecian Empire that is described as a leopard. The characteristic of a leopard is its swiftness – it can run, it hides in the tree and takes its prey by surprise and it is crafty likened to the Grecians. After the death of Alexander the Great the Grecian kingdom was divided into four segments thus four heads in one nation / leopard

1. 1st head – Lysimachia Antipater was given Thracia
2. 2nd head – Cassander was given Macedonia
3. 3rd head – Seleucius (The Seleucids as in lineage not nation) was given Babylon, Syria and Asia Minor
4. 4th head Ptolemy was given Egypt and Palestine

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In time Ptolemy acquired the area of Thracia from or after Lysimachus, and Seleucus took care of the Macedonian area after or from Cassander so the Cassander and Lysimachus areas were absorbed by the Seleucids and Ptolemy families

The Fourth Beast (Verse 7) read verse - refers to the Roman Empire. This beast was beyond description. The Roman Empire conquered for the sheer delight of doing so and nothing or no one was sacred. The whole picture here being painted, is one of a ferocious and cruel animal showing no consideration for anything or anyone but itself. Iron teeth depict devouring strength

The ten horns are the ten rulers (Emperors) of Rome

1. **Augustus** (Note Julius Caesar who some might regard as the first emperor, actually was head of a republic before the empire was formed and he was a dictator)
 2. **Tiberius**
 3. **Caligula**
 4. **Claudius**
 5. **Nero**
 6. **Galba**
 7. **Otho**
 8. **Vitellius**
 9. **Vespasian**
 10. **Titus**
- } these three emperors ruled for less than 4 months each

The little horn was Domitian – he was most like Nero. Domitian saw himself as ruler of the world and as a kind of God to be worshipped. People would not dare oppose him or they would die.

Domitian was the eleventh Roman Emperor and was known from his youth as a braggart. He made claims of a personal deity. He differs from the previous Emperors in two aspects

- A. He was the first emperor to claim that he was a God and to persecute God's people for not complying
- B. Before him there was no empire policy of persecution against God's people. (Nero may have persecuted them but only in a very small area.)

Galba, Otho and Vitellius reigned for very short periods of time so in actual fact Domitian becomes number eight. The Jews were very conscious of the significance of numbers 7 being the perfect number and 8 signifying a resurgence of power – a new beginning – the study on the significance of numbers is a study on its own

Verse 9

the vision continues

The son of man is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ whose kingdom is to be eternal and before whom the nations of the earth shall bow. One should not however, expect precise details in this general statement about the final outcome of world history

Throne = rule

Ancient of days = a very old person - God

White of snow = signifies purity

Flames of fire = cleansing power and judgement

The whole beast = the Roman Empire came to an end as it was not approved by God

Verse 18

The saints of the most high are the true Israel. His church made up of all faithful believers, His coming ushered in the new kingdom of God and all believers are its citizens– Israel was the stock

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- for example a rose bud is grafted onto a strong root stock so we as gentiles are the buds or branches grafted onto the stock and eventually we will be given eternal spirituality. Although this passage is referring to the Jews in Israel at the time when the kingdom of God took over from the power of the Romans we, as Christians today, are also heirs to that same kingdom.

Verse 23

The Roman Empire – the fourth beast Rome, as has been said before, conquered for the sheer delight of doing so and nothing and no one was sacred. In Previous Empires the policy was more humane and they made use of the people they captured

Verse 25

Domitian speaks against God and persecuted God's people. He also thought himself to be a God and wanted to be worshipped as such. He thought he could change times and the law but only God can do that.

The saints would be given into the hands of Domitian to be persecuted for a time. - For over 200 years Domitian persecuted the saints. "For a time". - Two times and a half a time are 3 ½ years. 3 ½ years are significant in the books of the Bible that have figurative language, as a time of suffering through which God protects his people

Verse 26

Is a prophecy heralding the demise of Domitian and the Roman Empire with the coming of Christ's kingdom which will be given to the saints which as we said is the new Israel.

Verse 28

My thoughts greatly alarmed me – showing that the Holy Spirit intended much more to be understood by Daniel's words than Daniel himself understood. We are not to limit the significance of prophecy to what the prophets themselves understood.

1 Peter 11: 12

The final Dream and visions Questions for Chapter 7

Daniel had many dreams and visions he did not understand. Daniel's visions revealed that the Messiah will be the ruler of a spiritual kingdom that will overpower and over shadow all other earthly kingdoms. These visions help us see that we should interpret all of history in the light of God's eternal kingdom

1. What was the significance of the winged lions or eagles? (verse 4)
2. Who or what was the bear with the ribs in his mouth?
3. Who or what is the leopard with four heads?
4. What is the significance of "Sea" in apocalyptic speech?
5. What's the significance of the beast coming out of the earth?
6. Who was the "Son of Man" in Daniel's vision?
7. Which Emperor considered himself to be a God and demanded that he be worshipped as such?